

Life on the Home Front Bethel during the Civil War

by
Stanley R. Howe

In honor of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War (1861-1865) and the Bethel Historical Society's upcoming participation in the "Maine Civil War Trail" project, the Society is pleased to present a revised and enlarged version of an article first published in the Winter 1983 issue of The Bethel Courier. Its author, Stanley R. Howe, is Associate Director and Director of Education & Research at the Bethel Historical Society, as well as a widely recognized authority on the Civil War era in Maine and northern New England.

Bethel, Maine, in 1860 was a town of 2,523 residents according to the federal census of that year, making it the second largest (next to Paris) town in Oxford County. It could boast 474 households, with an average size of five persons, and four vacant dwellings. Through the census (always bearing in mind certain errors), it can be determined that the average age of those living in the town in 1860 was twenty-six, with a wide variety of occupations represented. Not surprisingly, over eighty percent of the populace derived their livelihood from agriculture. However, as the decade of the 1860s progressed, commercial activity and manufacturing increased, particularly at Bethel Hill, "Skillington" (just west of the Hill), West Bethel, and South Bethel (Walker's Mills).

Eighty-seven percent of Bethel's citizens in 1860 were natives of Maine. Most of the others had been born in neighboring states, but several were natives of Ireland, perhaps having remained here following the construction of the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Railroad (later the Grand Trunk) during the 1840s and 1850s.

According to the 1860 census, the wealthiest head of a household (twenty-seven households were



A previously unpublished photograph of Major Gideon Alphonso Hastings (1821-1905) of Bethel. Well known after the War for his lumber dealings in the Wild River region south of Gilead, Gideon Hastings was mustered in as Captain of Company A, Twelfth Maine Regiment, November 15, 1861. He was later promoted to Major and transferred to the Twelfth Maine Battalion and mustered out April 18 1866. Courtesy of Stanley R. Howe.

counted with holdings worth \$5000 or more in real and personal estates) was Robert A Chapman, a successful merchant and local real estate speculator who, in 1859, built a handsome, three-story brick commercial block on Broad Street. His holdings were estimated to be worth a total of \$27,000. Close behind were Ira Crocker Kimball, also a merchant,

with holdings of \$25,000, and Moses Pattee, a mill owner and proprietor of a public hall on Spring Street that was the center of Bethel's social and political life during this era. Pattee had holdings worth \$18,000. Most of the others were farmers, except for physician Joshua Fanning, whose property was valued at \$8000.

In 1860, Bethel had one dentist, five doctors, twenty-eight teachers, eight clergymen, three lawyers and a wide variety of skilled and semi-skilled workers. Thirteen people were listed in 1860 as employed by the Grand Trunk Railroad. Two sailors were enumerated, as was one horse jockey. It was indeed an impressive number of skills and professions, but with none of the diversity that would be found in the final decades of the nineteenth century.

As in almost everything in this era, Bethel was perhaps quite typical of most Maine towns for its size and inland location. Throughout this study little appears to emerge that varied markedly from patterns prevalent in other communities. The town did not have any abolitionist groups established within its borders as did the Oxford County towns of Sumner, Paris, Peru and Norway, although there was a Male Antislavery Society founded in 1841 in Oxford County, according to Edward O. Shriver's book, *Go Free: The Antislavery Impulse in Maine 1833-1855* (1970). Presumably some Bethel men may have belonged to this group, but none has come to light as yet.

To understand popular sentiment in Bethel regarding the slavery question is a difficult proposition. A review of the newspapers of the era and the holdings in the archives of the Bethel Historical Society reveals few specific indications of antislavery sentiment. Presumably there were abolitionists in Bethel and a few who may have sided with the South when war broke out. It seems safe to say that most citizens remained in the middle, not certain blacks should vote or have any rights, but assured they should not be slaves either. (For details of northern views, see Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

One small insight which may or may not have meaning is the fact that a defense of slavery (George S. Sawyer's *Southern Institutes: Or an Inquiry Into the Origin and Early Prevalence of Slavery and the Slave Trade*, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1858) was owned by prominent attorney Enoch Foster Jr., who

was later a justice of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court. Of course, merely owning a book is no indication that Foster shared the South's sentiment, but it does suggest that he was at least familiar with some of its arguments.

The 1860 election, however, does provide some solid indications of political sentiment in Bethel, despite the fact that a son of Oxford—Hannibal Hamlin—was on the Republican ticket with Abraham Lincoln. The Lincoln/Hamlin GOP stood for no further extension of slavery and won Bethel's endorsement with 206 votes cast in its favor. The Stephen A. Douglas/Herschel V. Johnson Democratic ticket, which supported non-intervention with slave holding, garnered 101 votes. The Breckinridge Democrats, endorsed locally by former U.S. Congressman David Hammons (1814-1901), supported slavery in the territories and attracted 40 votes in Bethel. The ticket of John Bell and Edward Everett condemning sectional parties and upholding "the constitution of the country, the Union of the States and the influence of the law" received no support in this town.

Just prior to the outbreak of hostilities, the Republican Party in Bethel had grown to be the dominant one. The *Oxford Democrat* of March 1, 1861, noted that all the town officials were Republican except Second Selectman Oliver H. Mason (a nephew of Dr. Moses Mason, a Jacksonian Democrat who had served in Congress in the 1830s) and Samuel F. Gibson, the town agent who, it appears, became a "Copperhead" Democrat as the War progressed. Throughout the War, Bethel favored Republican candidates by comfortable margins. By 1864, Lincoln running with Andrew Johnson of Tennessee on a National Union ticket garnered 268 votes in Bethel compared with 208 for the Democratic slate of George B. McClellan and George H. Pendleton, a much closer vote than was usually the case. There were several reasons for this, but there may have been resentment against Lincoln for dropping Hamlin from the ticket.

Shortly after the firing on Fort Sumter in April, 1861, the call went out for 75,000 volunteers to protect the national capital. Maine was asked to furnish one regiment and Oxford County one company. There was only one military unit in Oxford County at the time and that was the Norway Light Infantry. This unit at once volunteered and requested additional men to fill up its ranks. Bethel sent eight men

to join the troops of the Norway infantry to fight what the *Oxford Democrat* termed "the putrid venom of secession."

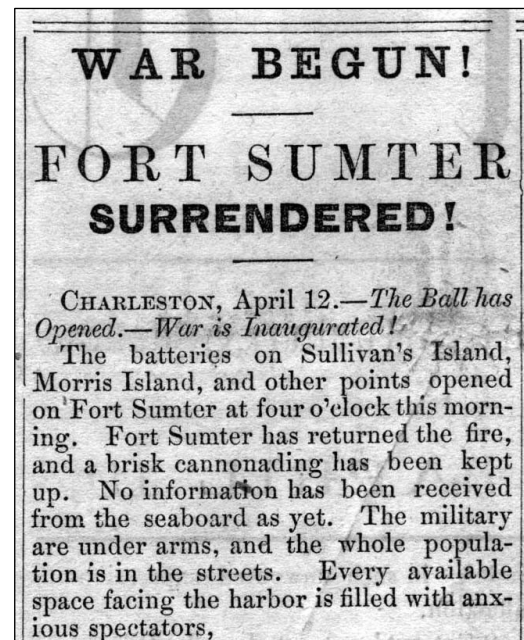
The Bethel men who went to Norway were described by local newspaper editor and Gould Academy principal Dr. Nathaniel T. True (1812-1887) in the *Bethel Courier* for April 26, 1861, as "fine, athletic, noble-looking fellows." They were Solon Robertson (4th Me.), Alfred True (son of Dr. True; 1st Me.), A. E. Seavey, Charles P. Stearns (1st Me.), Edward P. Stearns (1st Me.), H. Dolloff, Albert Grover (12th Me.; killed at Ship Island April 4, 1862), and Timothy M. Bean (12th Me.). Before leaving Bethel they were reported to have made the rounds of various businesses to say "adieu" to all. At the depot, where they were to depart, a Gould Academy student, E. M. Wight, mounted a carload of wood and made a patriotic speech that Dr. True described as "appropriate and acceptable" for the occasion.

A second call from Washington soon followed for 300,000 men for three years. The *Bethel Courier* described the military fervor of the town as "aroused." On May 31, 1861, the *Courier* reported that forty-one men had enlisted and a company of men would soon be organized. The company (the first organized in Oxford County after the call) was soon formed by Clark S. Edwards (1824-1903) and called the "Bethel Rifle Guards." (Later, Edwards would lead Company I, 5th Me., serving in the major engagements of the Army of the Potomac, including Gettysburg. His war record would be a major factor in his selection as the Democratic candidate for Governor of Maine in 1886.) Its officers, besides Edwards, were John B. Walker and Cyrus M. Wormell. Major William P. Frye was at the organizational meeting and made what Dr. William B. Lapham (1828-1894) called in his *History of Bethel*, "a very eloquent and patriotic speech."

By the end of May the eight Bethel soldiers were in Portland and "in good spirits," according to the report in the *Courier*. They were "eager to get into active service" and had all taken the pledge to abstain from intoxicating liquor, one of the many temperance efforts made by Neal Dow's forces. A former resident of Newry living in Portland at the time presented these Bethel soldiers with various necessities, and a farmer in Westbrook provided them with milk and apples.

In Bethel, the erection of what the *Courier* termed "a fine flag staff" was placed on the common symbo-

lizing the town's commitment to the war effort. A company of home guards was organized in May of 1861 by Gideon A. Hastings (1821-1905). The grandson of a founder of Bethel and later the leading spirit in the extensive Hastings Lumber Company operations on Wild River south of Gilead, Hastings became Captain of Company A, Twelfth Maine Volunteers in the fall of 1861. During the War he was promoted to Major and was present at the capture of New Orleans, serving in all the campaigns in the Gulf Department. He also served in the Shenandoah Valley under General Sheridan, and after the War became Provost Marshall of West Georgia and detailed to the Freedman's Bureau. Always a Democrat in politics, upon his return to Bethel he became town clerk, selectman, county commissioner and representative to the legislature.



The Friday, April 19, 1861, issue of The Bethel Courier newspaper carried the news of the bombardment of Fort Sumter and the beginning of the Civil War.

Despite this distinguished record and impressive role during the War, a letter to Governor Israel Washburn in October 1861 was not so reassuring. C. J. Talbot of Portland, who apparently was no admirer of Hastings and his brother-in-law, William K. Kimball of Paris (who also compiled an outstanding war record), wrote that they did "not care about the principle" of the War and would certainly "sell out to Jeff Davis if found that to be the best." Talbot ac-

cused Hastings and Kimball of being "Peace Men" and "Dana Men" with "no heart for the war." (John W. Dana was the "Copperhead" candidate for Governor of Maine in 1861 and received a substantial share of the Democratic support of Bethel—129 votes.) The Governor's correspondent went on to urge him to deny them commissions, arguing "the public will sustain you in standing up firmly and refusing to commission them." Governor Washburn was apparently not moved by these pleas, since both men received their commissions and served the Union cause with distinction.

In July, 1861, the battle of Bull Run resulted in a complete route of Union forces. The *Oxford Democrat* for August 2, 1861, urged that no one lose hope in this loss but that the Fifth Maine was "all cut up." No Bethel soldier, as far as was known, had been lost, although one, Sergeant Scribner, had been wounded. In addition, the Captain's water boy, thirteen year old Charles Freeman, was missing.



Despite the effects and distractions of the Civil War, Bethel experienced increased industrial and commercial prosperity during the 1860s. Begun in the summer of 1861 and completed in 1863, the Chandler House (photo, left) was one of three large wooden hotels that faced onto the Bethel Hill common by 1865. Noted for their spaciousness and fine appointments, these hotels and a number of smaller boarding houses and inns catered to thousands of tourists drawn to Bethel by its convenient and scenic location on the "eastern slope" [a term coined in the 1850s] of the White Mountains.

The next week, the *Democrat* brought further news of the War for Bethel. Young Charlie Freeman had been taken prisoner and was incarcerated in Rich-

mond (he was released as a result of a prisoner exchange and returned to Bethel). Washington Robertson of Bethel was now reported missing. (Later it was determined that he had deserted.) Bethel men seem to have been, the newspaper reported, "utterly exhausted from want of sleep, food and a long march on the double quick before they arrived at the scene of the action." Taking up a contention to be repeated in this newspaper and many others during the War, the *Democrat* added: "There has been some outrageously bad management in that battle." This underscores the point made by the famed Civil War historian Bruce Catton concerning the weapons used. He contended these changed, but the tactics employed remained the same as in the American Revolution. Catton cited the fact that the rifle had become decidedly more deadly, but the strategy employed assumed these weapons to be far less accurate. As a result, many men were killed or wounded who might have otherwise survived without injury. Another factor to be considered in the management of war was that the troops on both sides were rather casually organized. In many cases, discipline depended heavily upon the popularity and calibre of the commanding officers. This situation caused the great Prussian general Von Moltke to consider the American Civil War of little interest to military tacticians since it was in the opinion merely "the movement of armed mobs."

These "armed mobs," in Bruce Catton's view, caused the Civil War to be more like World War I since each side considered that anything which would assist the other in prolonging the war was a target and should be dealt with accordingly. This "total war" outlook meant in the North's case, for instance, that if a bridge, railroad, farm or factory allowed the South to continue the War, it was a target for destruction. Regular reports of such destruction filled the pages of the *Democrat*, and while we have no firm first-hand views of Bethel citizens who read these pages, their reactions must have been obvious.

Equally compelling were the reports of wounds and deaths. These were described in detail as they happened and could not have helped but have had the effect of bringing the Civil War graphically to the home front, especially when one considers the numbers who attended funerals in Bethel for dead soldiers. Twenty-eight Bethel men were killed or died as a result of wounds received during the War, and

their funerals were frequently characterized with sermons strongly supporting the Union cause.

Even more poignant were the reports of returned soldiers who survived the War in southern prisons. One such example was Peter T. Bean of the Sixteenth Maine who was captured and spent nearly a year in the notorious Libby Prison. He described an ordeal where he was "glad to get a lean dog to eat." His clothes were all worn off below the waist and his survival was in part due to his ability to stand for long hours, as he "did not want to lie down among the filth and vermin."

As grim as this news was to read, there is evidence that Bethel was indeed becoming increasingly prosperous as the War progressed. By the middle of 1863 the *Democrat* was reporting that the steam mill recently established to the west of Bethel Hill seemed "destined to do a good business." Summer visitors appeared to be increasing each year since additional facilities, including the three-and-a-half story Chandler House hotel on the common, were being built to house them. Prosperity even extended to farmers, since Dr. True, also a keen observer of agricultural developments, noted the high prices farmers were getting for crops—particularly for hops. (True, later editor of the *Maine Farmer*, was also founder of the first Farmer's Club in Maine, a state-wide predecessor to the Grange.) As the War continued, consumer prices rose and the Bethel column in the *Democrat* occasionally complained of the high prices paid for goods and services.

The second year of the War brought more and more reports of wartime activities in the pages of the *Democrat*. In early 1862, a soldier from an Illinois regiment wrote to a Bethel acquaintance that he had received three balls through his cap, one more struck his ear "just enough to draw blood," and another just grazed his head. The *Democrat* called the latter "pretty close grazing." On the fourth of July the *Democrat* reported on Bethel military processions followed by a gathering in Dr. Moses Mason's grove where the Declaration of Independence was read by A. S. Twitchell. Next came an adjournment to the Congregational Church where a "fervant" Union speech was heard. In the evening, fireworks were set off at West Bethel.

As the summer continued, recruiting offices were set up in Bethel with A. P. Knight as recruiting officer. Toward the end of July, 1862, more than one hundred men had enlisted. Fervor for the Union

cause apparently reached a new level of intensity that month when General Oliver Otis Howard addressed a group of local soldiers from the porch of the Bethel House, a large hotel on the west side of the common. Attending were men from the West Bethel Company (Eldridge Wheeler, Captain) and East Bethel Company (John Decatur Hastings, Captain). Later, many citizens gathered at Pattee's Hall for a meeting chaired by Dr. True, where Rev. David Garland offered a prayer for the safety of Bethel soldiers. General Howard also addressed this gathering. He made a stirring Union speech and praised the efforts of Bethel soldiers on the Potomac campaign. Colonel Edwards was selected for special commendation, and cheers were given for the Union, for the Bethel soldiers, for President Lincoln and General McClellan. Seven citizens were selected from this meeting to assist the Sanitary Commission in meeting the needs of the War, with D. F. Brown chosen as chairman.



Constructed on Spring Street at Bethel Hill in 1859, "Pattee's Hall" was a center for Bethel's social and political life for several decades and, notably, during the Civil War. Later owned by Bethel Grange #56 and eventually converted into an apartment house, the local landmark was demolished in 1978. Courtesy of Danna B. Nickerson.

The United States Sanitary Commission, a private agency organized at the beginning of the War, was responsible for assisting the War Department with the comfort of its soldiers and for the care of the sick and wounded. Many communities on the local level had established an organization to help with the na-

tional effort. In Bethel, the Ladies Union Aid Society founded in late 1861 fulfilled this role. Even before the Aid Society was formed, Bethel citizens had sent the U.S. Sanitary Commission \$185 in contributions, plus twenty-nine barrels of vegetables and two of dried apples. The Union Aid Society was undertaken with contributions totaling \$413. It met weekly, usually at Pattee's Hall, but occasionally at a member's home, and was composed of some fifty ladies (several of whose husbands were in the War). Attempting to assist in meeting the needs of the men in the war zone, the Society sent food and supplies to Portland by train for delivery to the Commission in Washington. A typical shipment might include the following, which is recorded in the secretary's minutes for October 28, 1862: one bed sack, four hop pillows, twelve pillow slips, one vest, eight cravats, two pair socks, five cotton shirts, ninety-nine handkerchiefs, ten pair of slippers, fifteen towels, one roll of linen, two and a half pounds of lint, two hundred yards of bandages, one bag of bags, one bag of dried apples, one bag of dried blueberries, four packages of compresses, and one bag of beef tallow. Most work was done by hand, but on June 6, 1862, the minutes record that "two ladies came in with sewing machines, aiding greatly in forwarding the work of making shirts and drawers." The Ladies Union Aid Society is perhaps one of the best indicators of sentiment relating to the support for the Bethel war effort. These industrious ladies certainly produced large volumes of supplies and not an insignificant amount of money to support the Union cause.

Another good indication of sentiment during the War years was voting at town meetings. The regular annual meeting was held in March, but other special town meetings were called to deal with wartime issues. In July, 1862, a special meeting was held to authorize the Selectmen to borrow \$1500 to pay the bounty for soldiers and care for their families. Apparently, this amount appeared too generous to some citizens, for in September, 1862, it was voted on a motion by Mighill Mason to "pay a bounty to volunteers of twenty dollars and five dollars a month for the next six months." The \$1500 raised earlier was then reduced to \$900.

The following year the town voted to raise \$2000 for families of volunteers. A special town meeting in July, 1863, resulted in the passing over of an article to pay bounties to drafted men and conscripts. Discussion on this question, according to local historian

William B. Lapham, was "very animated." In August of the same year, those who had opposed passing over the article lost again by a vote of 74 to 16, but in a second meeting later in the day won approval in providing bounties of \$50 each, and the Selectmen were instructed to borrow money for this purpose if necessary.

By 1864 the draft had been instituted and it was voted to establish a recruiting committee of Israel G. Kimball, Gilman L. Blake and Timothy Bean, with \$1000 to be paid for bounties. Apparently not enough recruits were forthcoming, so that a special meeting in December named I. G. Kimball as agent "to procure either enlisted men or substitutes to fill the town's quotas." The town treasurer was authorized to borrow \$3000 for this purpose. By 1865, the last year of the conflict and with the end in sight, the town, without extensive debate, raised \$1500 to aid the families of volunteers. It appears throughout these years, as far as town meetings were concerned, there was no broad consensus as to how best to support Bethel soldiers and their families.

Criticism of the War's conduct was found in the pages of the *Democrat*. A Mrs. Goddard, who was present at Harper's Ferry when Union forces surrendered to an inferior force, spoke in Bethel about her belief that the War was being mismanaged. No further details are available as to the impact of her speech upon the town, but several Bethel soldiers in the Seventh Maine shortly afterward reported that they had full confidence in General McClellan.

Morale is always important in wartime and the *Democrat* frequently urged those back home to remember the men in the war zones. "Write to the soldiers," urged the newspaper, for "many a rough cheek has been wet with tears when a letter has been received from those at home and who by their letters gave a pledge they were not forgotten." A Bethel soldier, Simeon Sanborn of the Fifth Maine, wrote his mother from Camp Franklin, Virginia, December 16, 1861, that he had "some footings, mitten gloves and quite a number of other things sent me so I am not in any particular want at present." He also reported that he received "about all the Maine papers" and that it was a "good thing to have friends especially when you are in the army."

By late 1862 the *Democrat* itself provided visible evidence of the effect of the War by reducing its size due to inflation and the scarcity of materials. As another indication of the effect of the conflict, there

appeared in this first reduced-size issue an advertisement from Bethel attorney David Hammons indicating that he would assist soldiers having claims against the government.

The War was brought home in a dramatic manner in February, 1863, with an epidemic of smallpox at North Bethel. The *Democrat* reported that the disease had been carried home by a returning soldier. Despite this unpleasant news, Dr. True, in writing his column for the *Democrat*, was not always serious. In June, 1863, responding to the abundance of mosquitoes in Bethel he wrote that "the Southern rebellion has been entirely forgotten in the fight to keep them away from body."

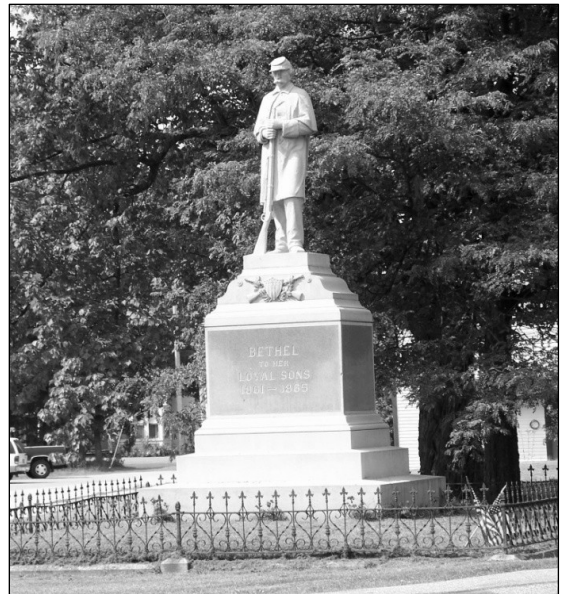
By July, 1863, the draft had been imposed and a list was published in the *Democrat* of sixty-four Bethel men who were to appear for induction. The newspaper reported that the young men who have been drafted "take the matter very heroically and cheerfully." In this call-up, only one "professional" man had been drafted, and that was Samuel F. Gibson, the "Copperhead" *Democrat*, lawyer and town agent who served as a captain from May 23, 1864 to May 7, 1865.

Few letters from Bethel soldiers have come to light to date, but one of particular interest is that of William L. Grover who was a Sergeant in Company B, Twenty-third Maine Volunteers, who served in the Union army from September 29, 1862, to July 15, 1863. Grover was apparently quite religious, as his letters are filled with references to God and church services. He was obviously quite content with his lot as a soldier, writing his sister from Muddy Branch, Maryland, in March, 1863, that he was "well, fat and homly (*sic*) though the boys tell me that I am growing handsome." Even though his letters were largely positive, he could not resist occasional references to home: "I hope Mr. Fernald [Gould Academy principal who later became the second president of the University of Maine at Orono] will prove a good teacher & build up the old academy school once more."

Simeon Sanborn, another Bethel soldier mentioned earlier, was similarly upbeat in his report from Camp Vernon, Virginia, in September, 1861. Writing to let the folks back home know that "Old Jeff has not gotten me yet," he described his situation: "We have plenty of peaches, watermelon and muskmelon and any quantity of grapes. I have eaten about a half bushel today. Have got a nice place for camping. It

is on a high hill [where we] can see all the ships and steamers pass up and down the river. We have plenty to eat and drink whiskey twice a day if we want. I don't draw my ration very often and I think if the rest of the boys did not draw so much of theirs it would be better for them."

In June, 1864, some excitement was generated by Deputy Sheriff Cyrus M. Wormell, who, assisted by G. L. Blake of Bethel and a company of local men, attempted to arrest a deserter, John E. Bean of Albany. They successfully surrounded the house he was hiding in, but when Bean came out the back door into the shed, he fired his revolver at two of the posse outside the house. A bullet went through the brow of Calvin J. Kimball's hat, and then struck Lyman Russell, the carriage painter, in the chin passing into his shoulder where he, in the words of the *Democrat*, "picked it out." He was only slightly injured. Bean then sprang for the woods. Twenty shots were fired at him, but he managed to escape into the night.



Bethel's Civil War Soldier's monument was dedicated on Memorial Day 1908. The account of this event in the 4 June 1908 edition of the Bethel Citizen captures some of the patriotic fervor the event must have stirred in the hearts of those in attendance. As the Citizen reported: "Every fluttering flag waved patriotism and every heart throbbed with love of country." The newspaper continued: "It was a glorious day and we cannot be too grateful to the enthusiastic mind which conceived it and the loyal workers who cooperated in carrying the plan to such a happy consummation."

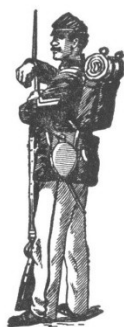
Bethel in the War of the Rebellion

by
William B. Lapham

Bounty jumpers were not always so lucky. In December, 1864, near the end of the War, the *Democrat* reported that two men were arrested attempting to pass through Bethel on their way to Canada. Apparently, this town was a familiar route for those trying to collect the bounty paid for enlisting and then deserting, for the *Democrat* periodically recorded attempts to stem this flow of lawbreakers.

Probably no event has more human interest than the case of Sergeant John Cooper. His story was perhaps repeated dozens of times throughout the country. He had been reported killed and buried following the battle of Cedar Creek. By the fall of 1864, he returned home (much to the joy of his family) to read his own obituary.

In summary, the Civil War years were important in Bethel for they marked the greater industrialization of the town, the growth of the summer tourist trade with many hotels and boarding houses being established throughout the town, and the increased importance of Bethel Hill as the commercial center of the community. It is obvious that in Bethel, as in the North in general, not everyone agreed with the conduct of the War or how those who went off to fight it should be compensated. There were many differences of opinion reflected in the town meetings, election results, and activities—for example—of town agent Samuel F. Gibson, who ran as a "Copperhead" candidate for Oxford County Clerk of Courts in 1863. Probably the most important result of the War upon Bethel was its effect on her loyal sons. By examining the 1870 federal census it can be determined that five years after the War ended only 53 of the approximately 180 soldiers that the town sent to the War were still here to be counted. Besides those killed in the War, a few had died in the intervening years, but apparently for one hundred of the survivors other locations were more promising for earning a living and raising a family.



The following text is taken from the History of Bethel, Formerly Sudbury Canada, Oxford County, Maine 1768-1890, compiled by William B. Lapham and published in 1891 by the Press of the Maine Farmer. This same source includes a long list of "Bethel men who held commissions in the volunteer service during the war," which is available online by going to "The Courier" link on our web site homepage (www.bethelhistorical.org).

When in eighteen hundred and sixty-one the war of the rebellion broke out, Bethel in common with other towns in the County had no military organization. There was only one military company in the County and that the Norway Light Infantry. But Bethel was loyal to the government, and in the impending crisis, was prepared to do her whole duty. When President Lincoln called for seventy-five thousand volunteers to protect the National Capitol, Maine was asked to furnish one regiment and Oxford County one company. The Norway company at once volunteered, and asked for men to fill up the ranks. There was no necessity for repeating the call, or of urging men to enlist, for they at once began to pour in and it would have been an easy matter to have filled up several companies. Only a few could be taken from Bethel, but eight persons enlisted and went to take their places in the ranks of the Norway Light Infantry. Their names were Solon Robertson, Alfred M. True, Ai E. Seavey, Charles Stearns, Edward Stearns, H. Dolloff, Adelbert Grover and Timothy M. Bean. The first call was for three months' men, and the Bethel recruits served their term and most, if not all of them, re-enlisted.

A second call speedily followed the first, this time for three hundred thousand men for three years. Under date of May third [1861], the *Bethel Courier* stated that the military ardor of the people of the town was aroused, and that about forty men had enlisted, and that a company would be organized the following day. In the same editorial article it was stated that a company had been raised at Bryant's Pond [Woodstock] by Dr. [William B.] Lapham. In

its issue of May tenth, the *Courier* stated that the company recruited by Clark S. Edwards, known as the Bethel Rifle Guards, was organized on the Saturday previous (May fourth) by the choice of the following officers: Captain, Clark S. Edwards; First Lieutenant, John B. Walker; Second Lieutenant, Cyrus M. Wormell. Major, now United States Senator, Frye of General Virgin's staff was present at the organization, and made a very eloquent and patriotic speech. On the following day the company attended at the Congregational Church, where a sermon appropriate to the occasion was preached by Rev. John B. Wheelwright. In the afternoon they attended at the Universalist Church, where a very able and eloquent discourse was delivered by the pastor, Rev. Absalom G. Gaines, a native of Kentucky. In the evening they went to the Methodist Church, where they were addressed by Messrs. Blackman, Gaines, Wheelwright, Dr. [Nathaniel T.] True and [Deacon] George W. Chapman.

The roster of the company as printed in the *Courier* was as follows: Clark S. Edwards, Captain; John B. Walker, First Lieutenant; Cyrus M. Wormell, second Lieutenant; Daniel W. Sanborn, Orderly Sergeant. *Sergeants*: Charles C. Barker, Benjamin Freeman, Simeon W. Sanborn, Sullivan R. Hutchins, Washington F. Brown, Emery G. Young, Peter G. Knapp, James L. Parker. *Asa P. Knight, Clerk. Privates*: Henry F. Barker, Stillman N. Littlehale, William R. Harper, James H. Bowker, Charles Dunham, Oren S. Brown, Joseph B. Hammond, John A. Bent, Charles R. Bartlett, Willoughby R. York, George E. Small, M. C. Connor, Lorenzo Poor, Lorenzo D. Russell, Henry Vaillancourt, Levi W. Dolloff, James M. Everett, Joseph A. Twitchell, L. D. Wiley, David E. Andrews, E. C. Penley, Moses F. Kimball, Dustin A. Cook, Daniel Griffin, John W. Sanborn, Wm. H. Pingree, Asa D. Jordan, Oliver S. Lang, Stephen L. Ethridge, Lewis C. Beard, Edmund Merrill, Jr., Andrew J. Ayer, T. Spencer Peabody, Joseph U. Frye, Joseph L. Oliver, Wm. G. Capen, James Seavey, John E. Bean, Sidney T. Cross, David A. Edwards, Frank W. Ham, Samuel Gray, Jr., Elbridge G. McKeen, Washington B. Robertson, John A. Bryant, [Benjamin] C. Hicks, Charles Freeman, Henry F. Blanchard, Lafayette G. Goodnow, Charles M. Wentworth, Morrill S. Eastman, Albion Adams, Nelson Rice, Levi W. Towle, James C. Ayer, Stephen Burbank, Clement S. Heath, Sidney G. Wells, [and] Aaron F. Jackson.

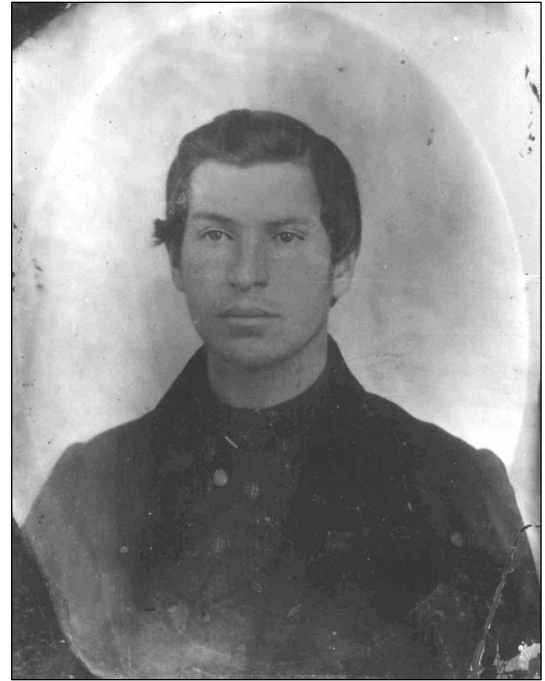
Lieutenant Joshua L. Sawyer came up from Portland to drill the company and prepare the men for active service. Before joining the Fifth Maine Volunteers as Company I, quite a change was made in the rank and file, a number of those who had enlisted being dropped out, and others enlisted to take their places. The Fifth Maine Volunteers joined the army of the Potomac in season to participate in the battle of Bull Run, and afterwards bore a conspicuous and highly creditable part in all the great battles in which the Army of the Potomac was engaged. Captain [Clark S.] Edwards received rapid promotion, and was soon at the head of the regiment. He was unflinching under fire, often led his men into action and achieved a brilliant record for conspicuous bravery. Some of those who went out under his command soon returned, others served out their time, re-enlisted, and remained throughout the war, while some fell on the field of battle and others died of disease. The Fifth was one of Maine's best regiments, and Company I was one of its best companies.

Company I, Fifth Maine Volunteer Infantry was the only company organized in Bethel during the war, but several other companies were commanded by Bethel officers. Gideon A. Hastings commanded Company A, Twelfth Maine; Abernethy Grover, Company H Thirteenth Maine; O'Neil W. Robinson, the Fourth Maine Battery; Adelbert B. Twitchell, the Seventh Maine Battery.

The following list embraces Bethel men who held commissions in the volunteer service during the war: Clark S. Edwards, Abernethy Grover, Adelbert B. Twitchell, Harlan P. Brown, Melville C. Kimball, Cyrus M. Wormell, Gideon A. Hastings, O'Neil W. Robinson, Robbins B. Grover, Wm H. H. Brown, John B. Walker, James C. Ayer, James C. Bartlett, John M. Freeman, Simeon W. Sanborn, John S. Chapman, [and] Joseph B. Hammond.

The fires of patriotism which kindled in Bethel at the firing upon Fort Sumpter [*sic*] burned brightly through the entire war. Every call for troops was promptly met, and Bethel soldiers took part in all the great battles of the army of the Potomac and in the department of the Gulf. The organizations to which Bethel men chiefly belonged were the First, Tenth and Twenty-ninth Maine, the last two of which were reorganizations of the First, the Fifth, Sixteenth, Seventeenth, Twentieth and Twenty-third, all connected with the Army of the Potomac, and the

Twelfth and Thirteenth which went to the department of the Gulf; also to the Fourth, Fifth and Seventh light batteries connected with the Army of the Potomac. The Twelfth and Thirteenth took part in the campaign of the Shenendoah [sic] under General Sheridan, and were in the sanguinary battles of Fisher's Hill and Cedar Creek in the autumn of eighteen hundred and sixty-four. There were scattering Bethel men in other organizations, but the greater part of them were in the regiments and batteries here indicated. Harlan P. Brown, who fell while bravely leading his men in the battle of Antietam, was an officer in the Seventh Maine Regiment. Many natives of Bethel also served on the quotas of other states where they were residing when the war began, and others served in the navy. It is believed that these two classes number at least half as many as those who went on the quota of the town. The record of these soldiers is every way honorable, and such as to reflect credit upon themselves, their town, their State and country. Many of those who went to the war never returned. Some fell on the field of battle, and others died of disease contracted in the service. Some occupy unknown graves, some repose in the National cemeteries, and in a few cases, their remains were brought home to mingle with the soil of their native town. Every year, loving hands renew the pledge of remembrance and affection by decorating their graves with flowers, and their sacrifices in behalf of liberty, home and a united country will never be forgotten. ■

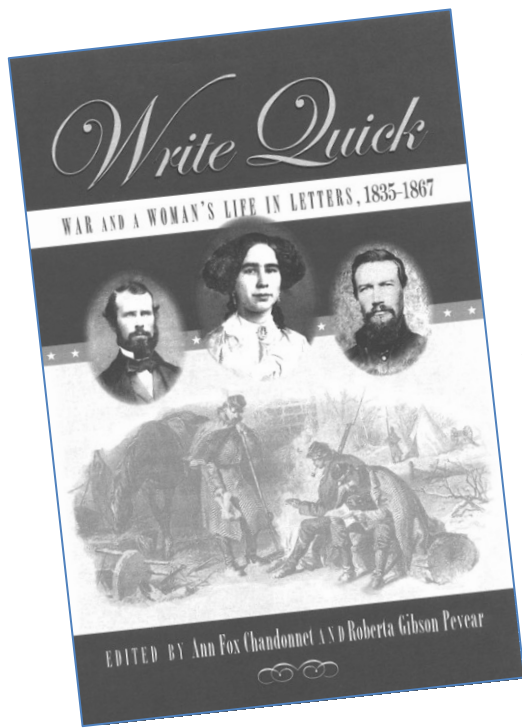


(Above) Born in 1844, Farnum Llewellyn Bean was one of twenty-eight Bethel men who lost their lives during the Civil War. Bean mustered into the Union Army as a private in Company B of the Twenty-third Maine Volunteers, but by December of 1862 was reported "sick in hospital." He died on December 20, 1862, at Offut's Cross Roads, Maryland, less than a month after his eighteenth birthday. Farnum Bean's fatal illness is a sad reminder of the fact that out of the more than 364,000 deaths during the Civil War, some 224,000 were from causes other than battle wounds.



(Left) Brigadier General Clark S. Edwards (1824-1903), one of Bethel's most distinguished Civil War veterans, participated in several engagements of the Army of the Potomac, including Gettysburg. In 1886 he was selected as the Democratic candidate for Governor of Maine, and in 1890 was appointed Maine's Commissioner to the Columbian Exposition at Chicago. Clark's portrait, Civil War uniform and discharge certificate are preserved in the Bethel Historical Society's collections.





Write Quick

WAR AND A WOMAN'S LIFE IN LETTERS, 1836-1867

*Edited by Ann Fox Chandonnet and Roberta Gibson Pevear
and published by the Bethel Historical Society*

AMID THE GATHERING CLOUDS OF WAR, far from the nation's centers of power, two American families felt the first ripples on the breeze. Andrew Bean, a teacher and farmer from small-town Bethel, Maine, answered the call to the Union infantry. His younger sister Eliza, having found both employment and a suitable marriage in the bustling mill city of Lowell, Massachusetts, soon saw her husband, Henry Foster, enlist as well. In more than 150 revealing letters dispatched from camp and field and home front, as well as Eliza Bean Foster's own diary, the honors and horrors of war

play out on an intimate stage.

Seldom does a surviving cache of documents illuminate the full span of the antebellum and war years in such close detail, from so many different angles. Illustrated with more than 50 original documents and never-before-published photographs, the volume traces Eliza's life from New England mill girl, to young married woman and mother, to war widow and victim of consumption. *Write Quick* presents a valuable case history and a poignant story of one Northern woman through her own pen and the lens of her contemporaries.

ANN FOX CHANDONNET, a New England native and longtime Alaska resident, is the author of numerous books, including *Alaska's Inside Passage* (Fodor's, 2009). Her food history *Gold Rush Grub* (University of Alaska Press, 2005) won an Outstanding Book award from the American Association of School Librarians. She currently resides in the Hickory, N.C., area.

ROBERTA GIBSON PEVEAR, who spent thirty-five years in business administration and law before serving as a New Hampshire state representative, grew up in Eliza Bean Foster's hometown of Bethel, Maine, and attended Gould Academy. She lives in Exeter, N.H.



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